556 According to the natives it was a public assertion of the father's high
562 social position and at the same time the greatest token of affection he could bestow on his daughter; the two things were inseparable. Not every native had the right to make his daughter a bolúmbú. On the contrary, he had to hold an especially prominent rank, that is to say, he had to be a wealthy, influential, and powerful head of a family. All the ceremonies, practices, and rules involved in this institution point in that direction. A comparison with the bolúmbú wife (1)

1. See Chapter VII, Article III. Unless she is his first wife. See ibid, and Article I.

lends additional plausibility to this explanation.

556 As we have said, this custom is in the process of disappearing
562 completely. In certain tribes such as the Beloko, subtribe of the
178 Lifumba, a substitute has actually been introduced. The favored daughter is dressed and adorned as before, except that European materials have replaced the furs. But the public character of the older institution has disappeared. The occasion is not surrounded with so many ceremonies. Finally, the girl is not called bolúmbú, for a new name has been invented; it is bondelóóngola, "the white man raises (educates) her." [35]

Article III. Friendship

572 Friendship is not unknown to the Nkundó. It is founded on the same basis as in Europe. I have seen more than one instance of true mutual affection between persons who were in no way related. Among the Blacks with whom I have associated there are some whom I personally consider sincere friends and who have shown me real affection, helped me to the full extent of their powers, and shown me complete confidence. There have even been some who have not been afraid to place themselves in serious difficulties and who have gone so far as to incriminate themselves in order to clear me, thereby exposing themselves to troubles and sanctions.

572 [201] Friends seldom or never give signs of their affection, apart from gifts and mutual assistance. Men are seldom seen embracing, although women do so frequently.

The Nkundó are familiar with friendship pacts (called boseka or, among the Bombwanja, likandeko) (1). Two persons of the same

1. Bofilí among the Ekonda, mbale among the Batswa.

sex are bound to one another in friendship (kota boseka or likandeko) [431] in the presence of a witness (ndonga), whose duty it is to deliver the gifts that are exchanged.

The conclusion of a friendship agreement is actually a custom of the women; men -- usually the husbands -- create friendship bonds only secondarily, in imitation of their wives. This pact is not automatically hereditary; the children may continue it -- through the same ndonga as their fathers -- but they are free to let it lapse. (2)

2. See also a special reason for friendship pacts in Chapter IV, Article I.

Two elements may be distinguished in the friendship pact: congeniality or affection and mutual assistance. The latter is in itself a sign of friendship, but it is not infrequently the sole reason for the pact among men who seek reciprocal support by this means. [36] As for the women, it may be said, on the contrary, that gifts are considered purely as tokens of affection and their bonds are based exclusively on affection. Often women who are very fond of each other do not bind themselves in a friendship pact but are content to show their affection in all simplicity. Men also may be very good friends without having recourse to a pact. But the conclusion of an agreement makes their relationship public and thus protects it against deleterious influences such as misunderstandings, disagreements, outbursts of anger, etc. One might say that the pact represents the addition of the element of reason to the element of emotion.

572 Unlike the affection among relatives, friendships cool and even end. This is especially true for pacts based purely on mutual assistance. Thus, if one of the friends is somewhat too stingy in comparison to the other, a rupture quickly results.

[561] The Nkundó also have especially affectionate feelings for their "age mates" (bonfngá, pl. banfngá), that is, for all those who were born the same day, week, month, or period as they. They feel united by special ties. Among themselves age mates consider and treat each other as brothers, help and assist each other, etc.

Their affection is natural; the sort of selfishness that may be found among "friends" is not present among age mates.

Their relationship is so close that if the occasion arises, they lend each other their wives. (1)

1. See Chapter VI, Article VIII, 1.

[551] Lastly, individuals bearing the same name (ndoí, pl. bandoí) show real affection toward each other; they help each other and exchange gifts. They make no pact as do the boseka, however.

It should be noted that these various bonds do not exist between persons of opposite sexes, among whom they would be condemned as concubinage. [37]

Article IV. Conjugal Love

583* The question has often been asked: how about love among these peoples? Do husbands and wives really love each other? We are not speaking here of sexual passion, which is generally present in addition to love between man and woman, but which in itself is clearly distinct from it. Love is the result of various emotions -- congeniality, affection, mutual appreciation, admiration, devotion, etc., and we judge the perfection of love according to the presence or absence of any one of these elements and their degree.

The question is by its very nature a very delicate one to answer. Actually, it is difficult to observe and analyze clear and precise facts pertaining to the subject. Our notion of it must of

192 tomba, "to spy"; the former may be an extension of the meaning of
184 the word bokɔ́lo, "promise." (1)

●[572] 1. Note in passing that a ndonga is also necessary for the boseka, or contract of friendship and mutual assistance. (See Chapter I, Part 1, Article III.)

Article III. The Engagement

584 589 1. The payment of the ikulɛ

The engagement begins with the first bride-price payment, which in former times was an arrow and for that reason is called likulɛ [556] or ilulɛ. If the suitor was very rich, he sometimes gave an ingɔ́ndɛ knife or even an empɛ́te. A poorer one would merely give the shaft of an arrow. Nowadays 1 or 2 copper rings are given. But the original name of this payment has been retained.

Arriving at the home of the father of his intended, [112] the suitor, his father (or a substitute for him), the ndonga(s) and often other relatives as well, sit down on one side of the lofɛnjɛ (the court in front of a dwelling), after an exchange of the usual courtesies. The girl and the representatives of her family sit down on the opposite side. As in all matters that a Nkundɔ́ has to settle, the host begins by inquiring into the reason for the visit. The young man's father answers: "We have come to ask for your daughter for our son." "How do you ask for her?" "We ask for her in marriage." These preliminary negotiations are called simply ɗwana nsango, "to ask each other for news."

Then the girl's father asks: "Who will bring the linkɔ (banana) or the bonyɛ́ku (partially ripe banana), that is, the gifts?" Through this figurative expression he asks who has been proposed as ndonga. The young man's father replies: so-and-so, and so-and-so. When they have been accepted, the fiancée's father has bananas, smoked fish, and sometimes hens brought in, and the witness passes them over to the future husband's group.

584 ●572 When an engagement is arranged for an expected child, the events may betray the hopes of the parents; and the child for whom the ikulɛ has been paid may turn out to be a boy. This mischance is dealt with in the following manner: either the suitor waits for the birth of a girl, or an alliance of friendship and mutual assistance (boseka, see Chapter I, Part 1, Article III) is established between him and the newborn child. Such an alliance is called lilɛa jɛ̃ jwende, "the marriage of men," (matrimonium viri). In no case is restitution made for the ikulɛ that has been paid. If the friendship between the two men remains unbroken later, it results in the marriage of the daughter of the man for whom the ikulɛ was paid before his birth, to the man who paid it or to his son or grandson. No new ikulɛ is paid for such a marriage; the payment of the bride price simply has to be completed in the usual fashion.

584 A man may acquire a young child for himself, or for a son, a younger brother, etc. In the past the former was more frequently the case, for the old men kept the women for themselves and wanted [234] to benefit from having them before leaving them to the youths as inheritance. But the latter situation also arose.

The purpose [of obtaining a young child as wife for a relative] was to prevent inexperienced youths who were not able to defend themselves from being deprived of the means of obtaining a wife should the father die prematurely and the heirs monopolize the harem and bride-price valuables to their own profit, which theoretically they have a right to do. This practice is thus a means of favoring a son or other relative by furnishing him with a wife earlier than is customary. Nowadays this is even a stronger reason [178] than in the past, because boys marry earlier than formerly.

Other reasons for obtaining a child as a wife are involved in the two above-mentioned instances. There is a greater certainty of getting one's money's worth; valuables can disappear for various reasons during long unproductive years.

584 855 But the most fundamental reason, in my opinion, is the one very often invoked by the Nkundó, namely the opportunity of personally attending to the future wife's education. There is no

584 855 question bit: that it is in the husband's interest to take care of it himself. He can accustom her from childhood on to special circumstances, to the laws of the clan, to the particular habits (virtues, faults, way of living, etc.) of his family, his wives, and, last but not least, himself. He can mold her according to his tastes and desires. Enormous advantages result from his success in doing so. This does not mean that he takes care of her personally, for he knows he is not a born educator. He therefore usually prefers to hand this [593] task over to his mother (or aunt or sister), who enjoys this obligation and likes to help her son and to participate directly and intimately in his household.

584 572 A childhood engagement between their respective offspring often results from an alliance between "friends." If the children later on do not want the marriage, that is all there is to it. Restitution of payments is made, or a substitution is arranged. Such a situation arose while this book was being written. [235] At least twenty years ago, Lokéta of Bolingo and Inélo of Bonjoku made a bond of friendship (boseka). The former begot a boy (Ituwó), the latter a girl (Lokoku). The parents arranged the engagement of their children by means of the ikuló payment. When Ituwó grew old enough to marry, he had no desire to marry Lokoku, for his heart was taken by another. But he had a younger brother, Itoko, who had affectionate feelings for Lokoku. Ituwó explained the situation to his mother (since his father had died in the interim), and she resumed the relationship with Inélo. They all came to an agreement without difficulty. Itoló therefore married Lokoló in place of his elder brother, after paying the bride price for her.

584 If a little girl is not satisfied with the union that has been arranged she is free, according to the rules of law, to break it -- and not simply by failing to give her consent. Note that in such a case the husband is not entitled to any compensation for having raised this child.

In spite of the advantages involved in childhood unions, they should be rigorously held in check, since the affections often stray from bonds formed at such an early age. More should be done to

[37] 92 Such is the practice among age mates who maintain good and true relationships. They have free access to each other's wives, and [334] their actions cannot give rise to claims or fines. Nor if one is more "stingy" in the native view than another, can the latter start palavers with him on that account. But such an attitude will result in a cooling of the cordiality of their relationship, and refusals will be reciprocated.

Age mates do not demand indemnities from each other because it is not fitting for one to enrich himself at the other's expense. This rule applies even to "private" relations, to a simple "call," occurring without the lending described above. But if one of them goes too far, that is if he avails himself of another's wife two or three times without the latter doing likewise, a palaver may arise. The husband will believe that he has been wronged and will demand an indemnity. If his companion refuses on the grounds of the relationship which unites them, he may receive a reply such as the following: *inongɛ ɛtwɛngɛla ndɛ bɛtɛ?* "is the age-mate relationship a means for acquiring wives?" A regular battle may follow, and the husband is the one who will win the case before the court.

There are no relations permitted between men and women age mates. Such relations would be considered typical adultery.

The relations between a man and his age-mate's wife are therefore permitted not in themselves, but because of the husband's willingness to have them occur. Furthermore, the husband is not strictly required to yield his wife to him. That he does so is a [371] matter of good friendship, harmony, payment for services, and mutual respect and affection. From the purely matrimonial point of view, the terrain is free and neutral since, they say, the relations involved are purely private between them, and each one does what he thinks best.

[37] 372 In addition to the *bonɛnɛ*, the Nkundó have a relationship called *boseka*, "friendship," "friend." (It is called *bokandeko* among the Bombwanja). (1) In contrast to the practices that prevail between

1. See Chapter I, Part1, Article III.

age mates, the friendship pact has no connection with the wives of the men involved. If [335] there is a very firm friendship between them, one may lend his wife to the other in some situation or other, but this is a fairly rare occurrence. The Nkundó say that the boseka relationship is for mutual assistance only.

If a case of adultery occurs, the husband has every right to demand an indemnity, but as the occurrence is not repeated, he never goes to extremes, and, because of the friendship, he may ask as little as 2 or 3 rings. If the occurrences are repeated without reciprocity, however, the husband often makes a great to-do; he demands a large indemnity and breaks the friendship pact.

Instead of demanding an indemnity some men give their friend a gift (mpɛ́lí) asking him to stop the illicit relations. Often this action is but a subterfuge to relax the other's vigilance so that, feeling freer, he will be more easily apprehended.

Between persons bearing the same name (ndɔ́, pl. bandɔ́), (1)

1. See Chapter I, Part 1, Article III.

there is no free access to wives, nor are persons of opposite sexes ever considered ndɔ́. Such relations would be considered concubinage or pure and simple adultery.

To summarize, a certain freedom of access to each other's wives exists among age mates, but it is subject to the expressed or tacit consent of the respective husbands. These relations are not considered adulterous. Such freedom does not exist with respect to other categories of persons. But these, nevertheless, had to be mentioned here because the similarity among the kinds of relationship discussed might produce errors in the reader's mind, and because in certain parts of the Congo such persons fall into the same category as Nkundó age mates.

2. Concubinage

Concubinage (called lisɛ́mbɛ́ among the Bokote, ngɔ́ng among the Bombwanja as well as the Ekonda) is a union [335] between

586x The obligation to make restitution of the bride price falls upon the woman's father or the one who has replaced him (father, uncle, son, brother, etc., in accordance with the family hierarchy). He is responsible not only for everything that he received personally, but also for all that was paid to any member of the family. All these payments actually comprise the same single bride price, and all these persons together are represented by him. It is up to him to call them together for the discussion and examination of the payments made. [398] And if disputes arise, it is up to them to iron them out among themselves. The father need not personally have seen or known of the payments; the testimony of the ndonga is sufficient. If one or another of the relatives has acted wrongly by neglecting to make payments known to the person who is responsible, the latter can only place the blame on that relative. In no case can he refuse to make restitution of the valuables. The new husband should not be implicated in any way.

As to the mother's part, she and her clan must make restitution of whatever they have received, and they must do so even if she has broken with her daughter's father. The father summons her and asks her to return the valuables. This arrangement seldom leads to difficulties. In no case can the mother's portion be demanded from the father.

Finally, the Nkundó require that the reimbursement is made totally and all at once. They do not permit installments or intervals between them (as they do for the bride-price payment); they probably wish to avoid further disputes and endless palavers. Exceptionally, the parties come to a friendly agreement and permit a delay needed to collect some item or small portion of the valuables to be restored.

586x 572 As we have seen above, the restitution must be made entirely between the husband and the wife's family. The new husband must not participate. His only duty is to pay a bride price to his parents-in-law. He has no obligations toward the former husband. The latter cannot turn to him to recover his valuables. He can only claim them from the woman's family. Hence the axiom: njéngi la njéngi ntíkímínísíkí, "the two husbands cannot pursue each

551 The etymology of most names is impossible to trace, and they have no meaning. Some are borrowed from the nomenclature of the realms of nature or of things, but no attention is paid to their original meaning, and allusions to it -- sometimes attempted by certain Europeans -- are either not understood or badly received. Other names are dictated by the child's constitution, for example Ókunjolɔ́, "who will be buried even today," or Báwâlɔ́f, "one dies only later." (1) Names sometimes also commemorate a special

1. Both names are intended to prevent allusions to the child's debility and to express the equivalent of the saying: it is but a life of languor.

event, such as a great mourning (Báwá, "they die"; Bálela, "people weep"), a rivalry (Báunela, "they fight for," meaning that two men are rivals for the possession of the mother of the child to whom the name is given). Finally, some names carry the meaning of a saying, such as Báwake, "all men must die," etc.

572 In closing let us repeat that persons who bear the same name are often bound by a special friendship, give each other presents, and help each other. However, such a relationship does not entitle persons of different sexes to have intimate relations with each other, and if they do so such relations are treated as concubinage or simply adultery.

Article VI. Twins

845 Although for the Nkundó the birth of twins (bakɔa, sing. ɔaa), does not have the importance that other peoples attach to it [501], it does have some special features, the chief of which is the absence of the prohibitions and regulations that go with ordinary births. Twins are free from all common prohibitions; they are fulɔngɛ. (1) Let is examine the details.

1. This is true even with respect to abstentions during mourning.